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Translation as an Instrument of Linguistic, Cultural and Literary Criticism

Introduction

Translation can be a weapon, a cutting tool, a hatchet. Such characterisation may surprise. We are told too often that translations should be smooth, natural, elegant; or that translation distorts, betrays, is in more than one sense a false friend; or that it is a glass, impersonal, anonymous, transparent gauze. And that is so, sometimes. But translation has various functions. In the eyes of translators of religious works, from Luther to the martyr Dolet to the modern translators of the Koran and the Bible, translation is a weapon for truth. In the eyes of some political thinkers such as Engels, who supervised many translations of Marx's works and his own, it was a weapon for communism. Similarly the United Nation Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, universally translated, to which translators subscribe, is a weapon for morality. And of course translation is continuously used as an instrument for diffusing knowledge and technology.

However, I propose to discuss translations as a weapon in another sense, as a critical instrument turned on the source language text therefore as an implicit, indirect critical tool a text that is suddenly stripped of much of its own culture and all its own language, that is exposed to the harsh light of a different culture and language, and perhaps, if you believe in them (I do), to some universal truths and morality and common sense. As I wrote that, I

was listening to a prime example, a close broadcast translation of the transcript of a meeting of the Soviet Composers Union's meeting of 1948, where Shostakovich and others were accused of being traitors and enemies of the people, writing chamber music for a mere handful of people, 'spitting

in the face of the noble proletariat'. Perhaps, to many Soviets, it sounded different at the time ...

Criticism of Translations

We can criticise a translation using three points of reference. In the first place, if it is translated closely at the author's level, it is exposed to a different language, culture and literary or non-literary tradition. It may be open to criticism for jarring with the readers' concept of natural usage or social language, because it makes us laugh or feel embarrassed when this wasn't the author's intention (which is a common first reaction to close translation). Secondly, if the translation conforms broadly to target language norms, and the translation follows what the author might supposedly have written had he been a master of the target language, not what he actually wrote, the only way to assess the deficiencies of the translation is to examine the linguistic differences between it and the original. The third form of criticism is basically non-linguistic, but may underscore both the first and the second: it is to examine the translation and with it the original in relation to the truth, the material facts, and moral and aesthetic principles, so that the translation is evaluated as an independent free-standing work.

The Link Between Linguistics and Literature

Translation can bridge the gap between the two disciplines of linguistics and literature. In the UK this gap has had a chequered and disturbing history. When philology turned into linguistics in the 1920s and 1930s under the impulse in their different ways of such figures as Saussure and Bloomfield, it also turned away from literary or religious texts to the spoken language and to non-literary

models (Fries was the paradigm here) and proclaimed itself as the science of language. Literature was abandoned as material to be evaluated as well as analysed, and literary criticism was different, it was an art (however, Jakobson and the Prague School among linguists preserved the link between linguistics and literature). In translation there was a not dissimilar evolution, a turning away from literary to non-literary texts. Moreover, most writing about translation before the middle of this century was about literature nothing else was respectable. Nowadays I think the theorising about translating is as much about non-literary as about literary texts, and the quantity of translated non-literary far exceeds that of literary texts. In fact, in some countries (13 of the International Federation of Translators' (FIT) 62 member countries), translators are separated in two organi-

tions, technical and literary, and sometimes view each other with regrettable suspicion. In the UK there has been a history of mistrust between the established discipline of literary criticism and the relatively new linguistics. Under the impulse of Leavis, the most powerful English literary critic of the mid-century, much literary criticism took 'life' or shared moral experience as its main criterion for the value and perceptiveness of works of literature, and rejected much of the familiar technical apparatus of literary criticism as useless jargon as an incestuous turning to metalanguage. Leavis in fact denied the use of linguistics in literary criticism. British linguists, however, were never as resolutely anti-literary as the Americans. Halliday has produced sensitive analyses of Yeats and William Golding; and Quirk, Roger Fowler and Geoffrey Leech have brought linguistics and literary criticism closer together. Nevertheless you don't see much trace of linguistic jargon remaining. The few philosophical figures, way behind Barthes and Derrida, to span this gap in Britain have perhaps been Terence Hawkes and Terry Eagleton.

Now I am suggesting that translation is a kind of uncovering, that it suddenly exposes culture, 'art' and language to the cool wind of common sense, to literary and linguistic criticism in a different cultural climate, or should I here say 'space'? With some temerity, I give a scrap example from Michel Foucault by a scrap example, I mean an example that is inadequate, and may not be representative, but may give a better flavour of what I mean, rather than some sweeping generalisation that requires particular substantiation, such as saying that Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Morgan appear to be more impressive in French than in their native English.

By way of illustration, I take the following post-modernist passage:

Il faut faire l'histoire de cet autre tour de folie, de cet autre tour par lequel les hommes, dans le geste de raison souveraine qui enferme leur voisin, communiquent et se reconnaissent à travers le langage sans merci de la non-folie; retrouver le moment de cette conjuration, avant qu'elle n'ait été définitivement établie dans le règne de la vérité, avant qu'elle n'ait été ranimée par le lyrisme de la protestation. Tâcher de rejoindre, dans l'histoire, ce degré zéro de l'histoire de la folie, où elle est expérience indifférenciée, expérience non encore partagée du partage lui-même. Décrire, dès l'origine de sa courbure, cet "autre tour", qui, de part et d'autre de son geste, laisse retomber, choses désormais extérieures, sourdes à tout échange, et comme mortes l'une à l'autre, la Raison et la Folie.
(Foucault, 1976.)

Here then is Foucault and Richard Howard's translation:

We have yet to write the history of that other form of madness, by which men, in an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbors, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness; to define the moment of this conspiracy before it was permanently established in the 'realm' of truth, before it was revived by the lyricism of protest. We must try to return, in history, to that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience, a not yet divided experience of division itself. We must describe, from the start of its trajectory, that 'other form' which relegates Reason and Madness to one side or the other of its action as things henceforth external, deaf to all exchange, and as though dead to one another.
(Howard, 1988.)

The translation we may safely say, couldn't have been written in English; there is no English tradition behind it. It is a bare uninspiring translation, rightly sounding like a translation. French words have more nuances and connotations than English words; they have more semantic space to cover, since the vocabulary is so much smaller than the English. Nevertheless, the remarkable feature here is how closely the translator embraces the text, both in lexis and grammar. Howard barely interprets Foucault: the irony in 'sovereign reason' and 'merciless language of non-madness' is left to stand as it is. No attempt is made to gloss madness as an 'undifferentiated experience' when it was still indistinct from reason.

What is exposed in the Foucault text, what stands out more clearly in English than in French, is the description of the historical act, the conspiracy to divide Madness and Reason (why separate the idiots from the sane?) in such abstract terms and concepts, usually without agents, so that the reader has to grope to understand it and

to place it historically; take the 'lyricism of protest' who were the protesters? why was the protest lyrical? who were they protesting against? Presumably the conspirators, but who were the conspirators? What is 'a not yet divided experience of division itself? Is this the beginning of the other 'form' or 'stage' of madness, when it starts to separate off from 'reason'? Translation into a less abstract language, a language that at its best is not so prone to nominalising its verbs, nor to leaving them without case-partners (look at the pregnant symbols of division *courbure*, *partage*, *coupure*, *rupture* all without case-partners) functions as a critical instrument, or perhaps a cold douche.

Admittedly, the literary and cultural tradition behind Foucault makes it easier for the French reader to divine and perhaps accept such a passage; when it is translated, however, it is suddenly exposed to a more empirical judgement, to a universal resource of common sense. Or, as Richard Cobb would say (in *Sunday Times*, 9.1.89) 'it doesn't wear so well in the cold light of English ... It all sounds profound but it shows up rather lamely in trans-

lation'. If I may, not for the first time, translate the polite, ironical and perceptive Cobb, this means 'it may sound profound, but it is rubbish'. Not surprisingly, Anthony Quinton refers to Foucault's 'tremulous' hint of emancipating the oppressed the good intention is obscured in a cloud of abstractions.

Compare, now, a more recent guru, Jean Baudrillard, whose message is conveyed through continuous metaphor laced in abstraction, with a minimum of concrete observation here's a scrap: 'anorexic culture, a culture of disgust, of expulsion, of anthropoemia (*sic*), of rejection'. Baudrillard is merely the latest of a line of thinkers that draw more on the pragmatic than on the referential, which is another way of saying that they are strong on connotations and short on denotations. When they are well translated, they sound all too much like translations.

Take again:

Popular proverbs foresee more than they assert;
Le proverbe populaire prévoit beaucoup plus qu'il n'affirme;

they remain the speech of a humanity which is making itself, not one
Il reste la parole d'une humanité qui se fait, non

which is.
qui est.

(R. Barthes, 1957)

If this means anything, I assume it is that popular proverbs hold for the future as well as the present and so will go on being repeated; as Alan Duff (1981) has pointed out of another of Barthes's passages, it is a pompous vacuous statement, but in French, the vacuity is 'disguised' in brevity, sharp contrasts, pregnant verbs,

positives and negatives the classical style. In English, writers don't usually express themselves in such simplistic aphorisms after Bacon in fact the genre is not taken up again till Wilde, whilst in French a long line stretches from Pascal and La Rochefoucauld through La Bruyère and Chamfort to Camus, Malraux and Char. Semantic or close translation exposes Barthes's maxims linguistically and as a piece of literature; communicative or social translation would make it sound more natural, but also more banal.

I take it as axiomatic that many close transfers of meaning from one language to another will potentially or in fact cause some kind of jolt or clash or shock: most obviously, culture shock: the bread and the coffee you get in Namur is not the same as you get in Birmingham, unless the supermarkets have now made them so. So the French and English words appear to be referring to slightly different objects. At other times, the jolt may be lin-

guistic. You get a French passage: *Les questions du traducteur obligent le théoricien à remettre sans cesse son ouvrage sur le métier. L'important pour l'un et l'autre, est de ne pas se contenter de vivre l'acquis* (Margot, 1979: 339), which you might translate as: 'The translator's questions compel the theoreticians to continually improve their work. The important thing for all of them is not just to mark time.' Both French phrases, *remettre son ouvrage sur le métier* and *vivre l'acquis* are more vivid than the trite English versions, and could be brought nearer as 'rework their ideas' and 'live on one's experience'. In two languages, there is a frequent clash in the degree of freshness and concreteness with which an idea is expressed; each language has its own idioms which the translator is afraid to translate literally. It appears feeble to translate *sich aussprechen* as 'give vent to one's feelings', but what would you say if I said 'I'm going to speak myself out'? That's for discussion.

I had intended to take as my main example of translation as an instrument of literary criticism a French translation of Anne Brontë's masterpiece, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. This is a clumsily constructed, clumsily written novel, with long straggling sentences and stiff dialogue, with heavy parentheses that appear to be remote from the rhythms of normal speech, as well as rather conventional collocations ('no trifling sacrifice', 'throng and bustle', 'cherished predilections') and the kind of literary language and standard metaphors ('cast a cloud') one would expect from a mid-Victorian middle-class woman, with an emphasis on feelings and fine sentiments. Anne Brontë, however, was not concerned with literary values, only with telling the truth and her emotion smashes the clichés. This is a novel which, in translation into a modern

idiom, with a reduction of gush and a more straightforward syntax could perhaps become an improvement on its main theme, the tyranny of a husband over a wife who leaves him. Translation could, I suspect, act as a concentrating medium, an instrument of creative literary and linguistic criticism of this novel, which would be naturally enhanced by the requirement to convert from literary into modern colloquial but not 'idiomatic' usage. But this impressive work has never been translated into French.

The idea of adapting or abbreviating a classic is controversial and cannot be resolved by argument. It is possible that it can be done more successfully in translation.

Translation as an Instrument of Literary and Linguistic Criticism

Translation is an instrument of both literary and linguistic criticism when, for instance, a bloated rhetorical passage within a long rhetorical

tradition, say in Arabic or Italian, goes over the top. Take any erotic passage by Moravia or D'Annunzio:

As if the seal of treasure there intact,
On the plump pubis and the hollowed groin
The clinging droplets in the curly fleece
Glittered like dew in some resplendent fern.

(D'Annunzio, 1980)

The Italian is smoother, more mellifluous:

*E sul ventre brillasuggel d'intatte
richezzel'ombellico e su l'emerso
pube e ne l'incavato inguine attratte
scintillarono le goccioline tra il crespo
vello come rugiade tra un bel cespo.*

From *Venera d'acqua dolce*

G. D'Annunzio (translation Willoughby Higson)

Note here that translation revives a tiresome literary tradition by showing it up in another language, where, divested of this tradition, the words are more lubricious than erotic. In fact here the translator, Willoughby Higson, has done a tactful if sickly job; in the original the droplets glitter in her frizzy hair like dew in a beautiful tuft of grass.

Cultural Translation

I preface my discussion of cultural translation by pointing out that in any cultural problem, the translator has three basic choices: to keep the source language (SL) culture (say *Matignon*); to convert to the target language (TL) culture (the 'French Downing Street'); or to select a neutral international, inter-cultural term ('the French

Prime Minister or his office') within each of the three choices, there are various alternatives, and two or three of the procedures (couplets, triplets) may well be combined in one translation.

Secondly, when one makes any kind of choice (and there is a choice at most stages of translation, which is a problem-solving activity), one is implicitly making a criticism simply by preferring one procedure to another. Most languages retain vestiges of old cultural beliefs: the sun rises, the sun and virtue are female, a country is a woman, qualities are personified, 'considering' is in origin looking at the stars, etc., and if this is 'corrected' in the TL that is hardly cultural criticism. Countless metaphors remain in most lan-

guages testifying to the wickedness but also the goodness of animals. Now they are a convenience hard to get rid of but they still do residual 'harm'. The sexism that is rooted in most languages is another matter and the translator has to make a contribution towards its reduction (by translating into nonsexist language within the limits of natural usage); there are well established procedures for, for instance, 'desexing' man by using plurals, impersonal forms (one), generic terms (people, person, subject, individual, etc.) but if they become too obtrusive, the language becomes unnatural, which is self-defeating and counter-productive. Further, there are special problems in translating texts, ancient or modern, where sexism and ageism (the child as an object, the elderly as implicitly senile and handicapped) is in the accepted culture as well as in the language. F. R. Leavis (1958), a great élitist literary critic, writing a fine searching essay on 'The Great Books and a Liberal Education', could still write thoughtlessly of his undergraduates: 'These *men* are very highly selected', 'they find an especially good man', 'a man may leave the university' but he makes one reference to 'his or her' and the fact that his wife, Q. D. Leavis, collaborated with him in many books (though she did complain of his underestimation of her after his death) should justify the translation of 'man' as *l'étudiant if not les étudiants*.

Sexism raises the question of the other prejudices embedded in language which often remain obstinately a part of colloquial language: class (lower class), physical health (crippled), mental health (still 'safely' identified with stupidity (idiotic, imbecile), race (the word itself now unscientific or taboo), 'sexual orientation' (this current term in English equal opportunities advertisements sounds absurdly euphemistic ('straight', 'bent')), ageism (wrapped around in

'our seniors' and 'our juniors' or 'children' at school aged 18)not to mention all the euphemisms for war, death, sex, cruelty, excretion, etc.

The question here is how translators are to deal with the verbal manifestations of such prejudices. Are translators to become instruments of moral criticism? There is no single answer but the first point is that they should not ignore prejudice, they have to be aware of it. Translators are no longer, as I've said, invisible glass, pale reflections and echoes, neutral, faceless, etc.they never were, except in some people's ideal of a translator. Secondly, if these manifestations of prejudice appear in an authoritative text, ancient or modern, they should normally be reproduced (as accurately as possible) in the translation and the necessary criticisms made in the translator's preface, or, in an extreme case (perhaps Hitler's *Mein Kampf*) in footnotes, unless the translator is confident that the readership will not be misled.

In an authoritative text, a close translation of a passage objected to (say 'parts of Jordan conquered (*sic*) in 1967 and therefore recognized internationally as now belonging to Israel') is essential as an integral part of a text and as evidence or justification for the translator's '*sic*' in square brackets, which draws attention to the opprobrious anachronism of 'conquering' land. This is neater than a footnote at the bottom of a page, end of chapter or text, and is as far as translators can usually go and *must* go as they are not licensed to engage in a polemic with their text.

In a non-authoritative text, a translator has more right to modify adapt or delete but not distort passages likely to be offensive to the new readership; there may for instance be taboo words or swear words. Here translation is being used not as an instrument of criticism but to keep the readership's sympathetic understanding, which is in many instances a *sine qua non* in translation. *Sakrament noch mal*, *Mon Dieu*, goat, *Ziege*, 'bitch', could all be mistranslated and thereby alienate the readership. They are merely evidence of cultural history, past cultural attitudes; but translation is into present language.

Much has been written about cultural translation, *pace* Brewer (1988) who states that 'treatises on the theory of translation generally give short shrift to the transmission of culture as an aspect of the art of translation' but not much about translation as cultural criticism. Indeed, many translators, even those who recognise its interpretative or hermeneutic function, would deny that translators are critics. Now I could discuss this on a general moral level (I have done so) by pointing out that translators subscribe to the Nairobi Convention, and implicitly to the various

international human rights conventions; they have a duty either to refuse the commission, or to make the infringements clear to any reader through a preface or footnotes.

Translators are sometimes even required to exercise cultural criticism by their country's censorship. Thus Iago's 'Your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs' (*Othello* I.1.) has had to be translated by an astrological metaphor into Marathi, which could be regarded as an indirect criticism of the Maharashtra state's censorship laws.

In my opinion, if an original passage that is to be translated is so abstract and vague that it may mean anything or nothing, it is the translator's duty to translate it literally (but allowing for the standard grammatical transpositions) leaving it to the reader to decide whether it means anything or nothing. Thus, from *Le Somnambulisme* (Montplaisir & Demers, 1983: 69120):

In our opinion this sleep-walking condition indicates that when the instincts are roused, they fail to integrate owing to the dream's hallucinatory process, since the arousal of the instincts is necessarily eliminated in an extra psychic space outside.

A notre avis, il s'agit d'un échec de l'intégration de l'excitation pulsionnelle par le processus hallucinatoire du rêve, l'excitation devant alors se liquider dans un espace extra-psychique au dehors.

I realise the alternative view is that the translator must try to make better sense of, i.e. interpret, the passage, but this narrows the semantic range of the passage, and increases the likelihood of misinterpretation. The compromise is to couple the smooth rendering ('nerve movements') for the general reader who wants to know what the author in fact wrote (*comportement moteur*).

When translators change the image of a metaphor, they may do it for several reasons. If the SL metaphor is a standard metaphor which does not exist in the TL, they have to change it whether it is universal, e.g. 'in the cold light of the day', *à tête reposée*, 'in a new light', *mit andern Augen sehen*, or cultural, 'carrying coals to Newcastle' (a cultural fossil), *porter de l'eau à la rivière*. If it is a bizarre metaphor in an informative text, they may change it because they think it inappropriate; *la démographie galope* 'there's a population explosion' and thereby they are implicitly criticising the SL original.

Lastly, if translators change the image in an original universal metaphor in an authoritative text, they are weakening the original, and are themselves subject to criticism. Thus Polish and Bulgarian translators change 'dew' to 'mist' or 'smoke' in

O that this too too solid flesh would melt

Thaw and resolved itself into a dew.
(Hamlet 1.2)

Rather more obviously, an exaggerated metaphor in an informative text, *La thèse de l'épargne victime de l'inflation* can be toned down as 'the idea that savings are eliminated (or suffer) due to inflation'. Therefore once again metaphor is a touchstone of translation, in the sense that the literary translator who is shy of translating an original metaphor is either a coward or a critic.

I close by pointing out that there is research to be done in this field, which hinges on the accuracy of the translation in relation to the original. I think it is profitable to consider translation as an instrument of criticism,

particularly of distortion and deficiency, such as is apparent in so much published translation (Stuart Gilbert jiggling up Camus, Constance Garnett depressing Chekhov, etc.). I think such studies more profitable, and likely to stimulate an improvement in translation quality and to fulfil translation's progressive and socially responsible role, than their antithesis, the study of translation reception, which ignores the values of the original and is limited to the sociology of translating. Translation reception theory is centred in The Netherlands, Belgium and Israel, and though seeing translation as target-oriented, has no target except the study of the past. It is concerned with changing tastes rather than values. I am not denying that, to adapt Jauss's definition of reception theory, it is interesting to see a translation in terms of its impact on its contemporaries. This is an academic contribution to the study of literary taste, but it tends to devalue the translation as an important document and to ignore the original altogether. Thus if we simply study the impact of Stuart Gilbert's translations of *La Peste* and *L'Etranger* on their Anglo-Saxon readers, what do we find? First that they have sold enormously and have been much appreciated; secondly that the readership has been unaware that, if I may oversimplify, the style of the original is terse, usually formal and classical, while that of the translation is bright, emotional and colloquial, conforming to Stuart Gilbert's idea of snappy writing. So what does this tell us? (a) Possibly that a poor translation cannot keep a good book down, and this is normally true; (b) the only thing that is quite enough to wreck a translation is one or more fundamental errors of fact or figures, or for drama, the continuous phony dialect (as in Hauptmann's case); (c) the impact of Camus was first on professional critics and academics rather than a

readership; these have ensured the enormous Anglo-Saxon readership for Camus regardless of the quality of the translation, which many of them have hardly bothered to read let alone comment on (there are some exceptions) (reviews of translations normally ignore the translator); (d) in relation to popularity, content carries far more weight than form, whether in works of art or in trash, whether in translation or in original. After that cynical conclusion, you may wonder what is the point of reception theory, which is both rather theoretical and passive, and what is the point of translation criticism, which is active but doesn't seem to make a great deal of difference. I would have to reply that translation criticism as well as translation sociology are always the concern of a minority or an élite which is exercised over the larger and democratic diffusion of the values it upholds (the only way to reconcile élitism and democracy is to see the élite as a pressure group striving to increase its own numbers in fact this is how Nietzsche saw it).

Bad writing is bad writing in any language, however well or however badly it is translated. Nothing could be more naïve than the excuse of a trans-

lation theorist who, when I declined to review his book (written in English) on the ground that my view would be unfavourable, wrote back to say that English wasn't his native language. When I talk about bad writing, I don't mean deficient grammar or misused words; I mean overused words, overused collocations, newly and excessively suffixed words ('-tualise', '-tuality', '-tability', '-tionalisation', '-ticity', '-nismic', '-tistic', '-timisation', '-tational', 'conceptuality', 'problematise', 'analytico-referential', 'aestheticise', 'recommodification', and add 'interact', 'interface'), the overbloated abstractions that substitute for the small kernels of thinking; and in 1988 when there is less awareness of Latin, these easily translated suffixes sound rawer in English or German than in French, where they originated. They indicate the abstractions and images which, paralleling the media, replace reality. It is my contention that close translation can expose such writing as language for its imprecision, as literature for its lack of correspondence with reality (no, not for 'ugliness' that's an illusion). This is the 'monstrous rhetoric of post-modernism' (Bradfield, 1988), the pretentious rubbish which translation into empirical English should pulverise, but which intellectual English humbugs take seriously. And again, the value of writing cannot be equated with the quality of a culture.

Romanticism, for instance, which has many forms, but may be said to centre on one individual's emotional relationship with another or with nature, is characteristic of various cultures at various periods, but the value of this or that romantic work depends on its truth to shared experience of life and on its artistic qualities, not on its 'culture'. In fact, when it is translated, and necessarily denuded of its phonaesthetic properties, it may be exposed for the poor and

vacuous thing it is. I shall be treading on a few corns with my scrap example:

*La mort et la beauté sont deux choses profondes
Qui contiennent tant d'ombre et d'azur qu'on dirait
Deux soeurs également terribles et fécondes
Ayant la même énigme et le même secret.*

If I translate this first quatrain of a Hugolian sonnet is is only to show that when English is divested of the French poetic clichés and their literary or cultural associations (and *ondes, sombre forêt, divin abîme, gouffre* are to follow), it is as trite as the French. 'Death and beauty are two deep things which contain so much shade and azure that they look like two equally terrible and fertile sisters, having the same enigma and the same secret.' I am simply saying that a French reader, inebriated by a surfeit of this cloying inverted language, balancing the words in each line, can apparently go on deceiving his pupils that this is poetry, but when it is stripped of its sound effects and the words so often linked to this cultural period, when it is transferred into another language, there is nothing there, it's empty. There is no

instrument of language that is so piercing and revealing as translation. No wonder that in the Middle Ages the scribes, the cultural hegemony, used Latin with its deliberately complicated grammar as a cloak to ensure that the sacred texts were not popularised, not revealed. But translation, if it is naturalised, if it is continually made to conform to the TL culture, can also be the instrument of a source language hegemony, can be anodine, unrecognisable, docile. Oddly, the best example of such translation is the 'To be or not to be' monologue, so brilliantly analysed by Tytler in 1790, turning Hamlet into a freethinker. However, the purpose of my paper is more militant: to use translation not for sociological purposes but as a critical instrument of literature, culture and language in the service of better understanding.

Unless literary translation becomes accurate, unless its scientific component is recognised, it will continue to be regarded, as many see it now, merely as cultural history. It would be generally agreed that medical, technical, legal translation would be a disaster, if its main stress were not on accuracy. When political speeches and statements are mistranslated (and translation may well uncover a misstatement of fact as well) there is an outcry, sometimes historic. A literary text, where connotations are more important than denotations, as the latter only exist ultimately in the writer's mind, and the other resources of language are more frequently and continuously used, is more complex, not necessarily more difficult to translate than a nonliterary text; translation can barely expose its phonaesthetic properties (alliteration, the most ancient and powerful, onomatopoea, assonance, rhyme, metre) since more often than not it can only echo or hint at many of them. It often sacrifices them unless of course phonaesthetic properties have

priority over connotation as well as reference, and no moral purpose exists, as in nonsense and 'pure' aesthetic literature such as surrealism.

Outside the two extremes, however, which are non-literary and phonaesthetic texts, I think that literal translation has a powerful critical function, which can be exercised when 'classics' are retranslated, but more powerfully on contemporary texts; the most important function here is not linguistic, literary or cultural, but moral. Imagine Spanish bull-fighting texts, fox-hunting texts, managerial finance worshipping texts, suddenly wrenched from their cultural traditions, exposed closely and coldly to common sense, to the lay reader, to the critic. In this intensive period of translation, where transparency or glasnost or honesty comes into its own, so would sobriety.